



HEALING THE SPIRIT

# Donor Family Services Spring 2026 Newsletter

Dear Donor Families,

We have some wonderful events coming up across Florida, Virginia, and Washington and we hope you will join us. Over the next few months, we will be hosting baseball games, our annual In Celebration & Remembrance ceremonies, and a variety of workshops, all designed to give you time to connect, reflect and honor your loved ones.

We're also excited to introduce a new workshop series in Washington state: Coffee & Canvas. This welcoming space is all about creative expression, good conversation, and refreshments. We would love to see you there.

## Upcoming Spring and Summer Donor Family Events

April 10	Norfolk, VA	Norfolk Tides Baseball Game, Harbor Park
April 14	Bothell, WA	Coffee & Canvas, North Creek School House at Centennial Park
April 16	Richmond, VA	IC&R Ceremony, Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens
April 18	Yakima, WA	Coffee & Canvas, Yakima Valley Museum
April 19	Roanoke, VA	IC&R Ceremony, The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center
April 22	Virginia Beach, VA	IC&R Ceremony, Holiday Inn & Suites - North Beach
May 3	Edmonds, WA	IC&R Ceremony, Edmonds Waterfront Center
May 14	Bellevue, WA	Coffee & Canvas, Mercurys Coffee Co.
May 29	Salem, VA	Salem Ridge Yaks Baseball Game, Carilion Clinic Field
June 13	Jacksonville, FL	Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp Baseball Game, Vystar Ballpark
June 26	Richmond, VA	Richmond Flying Squirrels Baseball Game, CarMax Park

To register, scan QR code or visit:  
<https://www.lifenethealth.org/healingthespirit/events>



If you would like more information about any of our programs, contact us at 800-847-8731 or [DFS@lifenethealth.org](mailto:DFS@lifenethealth.org)





## Navigating a Friend's Anger After Sudden Loss

Dear Dr. Leary:

*A dear friend's husband died suddenly, and I want to help her move through her grief, but find she is so angry that I am afraid to be around her. Can you help me find another perspective?*

- Scared of Her Anger

Dear Scared:

C. S. Lewis, in his seminal book *A Grief Observed*, noted that grief often feels like fear. Your friend's foundation has shifted. Her world feels up-ended and unsettled. She has never been in this place, alone and afraid, before. She does not know what to do next, and her grief has probably dulled her memory and confused her ability to think rationally. Her grief probably comes in waves and swamps her with feelings of incompetence, abandonment, and terror. She may feel damaged, ashamed, and embarrassed to be a burden to others. Fear often shows up as anger and may be the only way she feels any personal power. Who wouldn't feel angry at this sudden loss of control and balance?

If we have never visited a similar challenge ourselves, we may also feel afraid and incompetent. We often try to rush through grief because the feelings are so intense, uncomfortable and unknown. But grief asks to be FELT, not managed. If you can rise above the level of "the problem" and be that safe, non-judgmental space, you will make a difference.

Grief needs permission. This sounds like "whatever feelings you have are okay." Grief needs presence without expectations. This looks like showing up without an agenda or personal needs that steer the conversation. Grief needs non-judgmental encouragement. This sounds like "Yes" to her perspective, without suggestions or trying to "fix" her. Grief needs curiosity and the time to explore it. This sounds like open-ended questions and a response that says, "tell me more". Grief needs your blessing that she is not okay. This looks like nodding to difficult statements and saying, "I love you no matter what is going on inside."

You can support her as the waves of grief keep coming. You can help her float and perhaps be that person that she hangs on to when she thinks she might drown in her tears. You might provide respite in the form of walking-and-talking to get her out into nature and out of isolation. You might be that person who says her husband's name and remembers funny stories and memories you've shared. Over time, she may find that grief can be a teacher rather than a problem to be avoided, because you have sat with her through the worst of times and shown her that she can face her most dreaded feelings.

You do not need to know the "right" words to say. You just need to stay. One way to do that is to be in touch every day, in a non-intrusive way such as texting that you are thinking of her but do not need a response; or sending cards that she can read at her best time. When many disappear after the initial acute time of grief, if you continue to show up as a loving, supportive presence in her life, your friend is more likely to re-emerge wiser, softer, with more compassion toward herself and others. As she faces her fear of grief and grows, so too, you can face your fear of anger and let it teach you.

- Lani

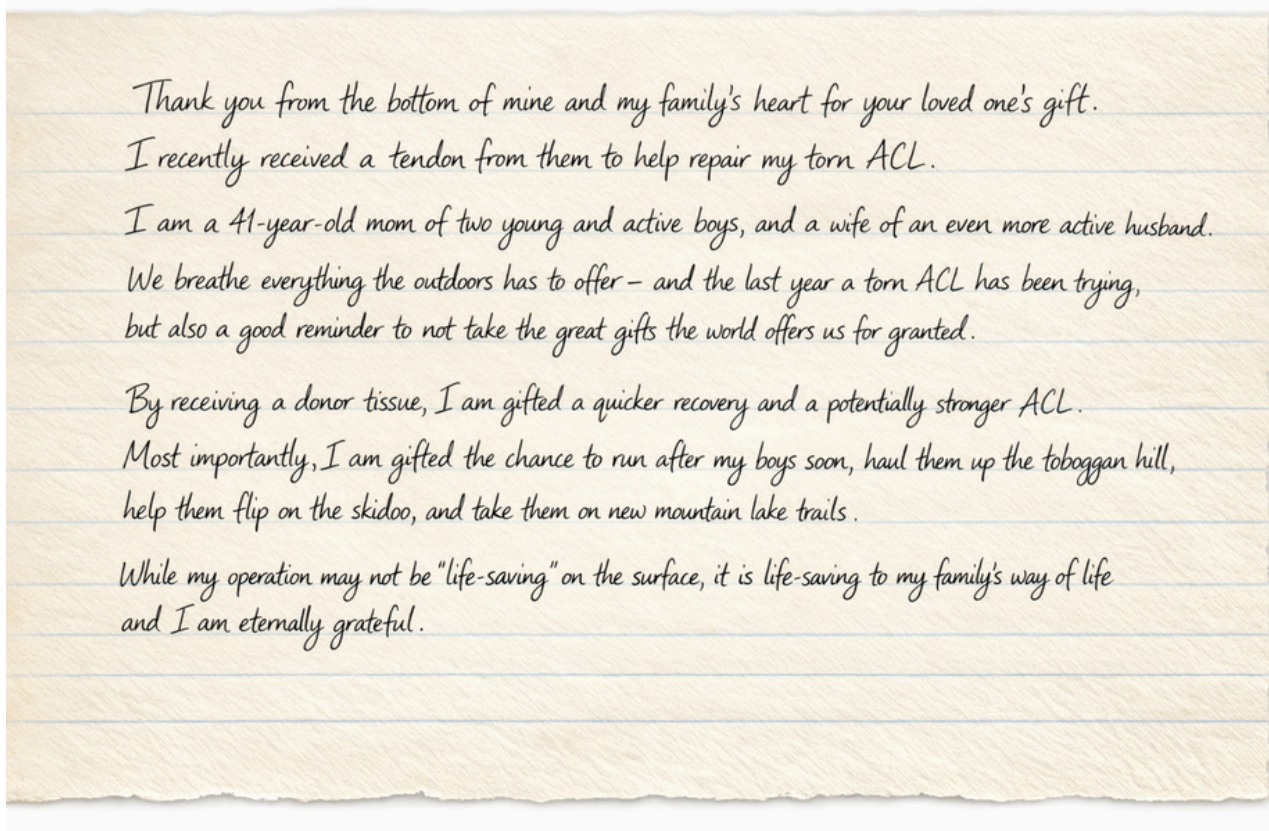


Lani Leary, Ph.D., specializes in work with chronically ill, dying and bereaved clients. Dr. Leary has worked for the past 35 years as a psychotherapist in private practice and in eight hospices across the country. Have a question for Dr. Leary? Contact us at [DFS@lifenethealth.org](mailto:DFS@lifenethealth.org).



This year, we are celebrating 20 years of LifeNet Health's Thanks2You program. Since 2006, Thanks2You has empowered organ and tissue recipients to express their gratitude to donor families, facilitating thousands of letters each year that offer comfort and connection to those who gave the gift of life. In some cases, when both parties wish, Donor Family Advocates facilitate in-person meetings between recipients and donor families.

One donor family recently received this letter from a recipient:



Thanks2You continues to grow. Families whose loved ones donated organs, tissues or cells to research have recently begun receiving thank you letters from the researchers themselves, whose work creates scientific advances that benefit countless lives.

As the year progresses, we will continue to celebrate the impact of Thanks2You and the donors, families, and recipients whose stories bring our mission to life.





## There is always a song...

By Andrew Kruse, Donor Family Advocate

During a recent event at the Museum of Popular Culture in Seattle, donor families had the opportunity to explore creative outlets, different genres of film and music, and see costumes and set pieces from movies and television shows.

One exhibit titled, “Never Turn Back: Echoes of African American Music,” highlighted the contributions of African Americans to gospel, soul, blues, R&B, pop, and the broader music industry. A quote from blues singer Bessie Smith stood out to me: “No matter how tough life gets, there is always a song that can heal the soul.”

During this season of grief, we hope that you are able to develop rhythms, ways of remembrance, and new memories to help you cope and begin to heal. While activities like physical fitness, meditation and journaling can all be beneficial, music is a universal language that speaks to the heart in a unique way. It speaks to the mind as well.



Journalist Kristen Weir writes in the Monitor on Psychology that “music is a mirror of the brain itself, and it has its own implications for cognition, emotion, and identity.”<sup>1</sup> The American Music Therapy Association also notes that, “it is imperative to watch for responses of pleasure and relaxation, but also signs of increased agitation and discomfort from music to allow you to adjust music delivery accordingly.”<sup>2</sup>



I surveyed our Donor Family Services team and asked what songs have helped them get through a tough time. Here are some of their responses:

- “I won’t give Up” by Jason Mraz
- “Lean on Me”
- “More Time” by NEEDTOBREATHE
- “Still Believe” by Tim Cappello (The Lost Boys soundtrack)
- “Blackbird” by Alter Bridge

What song has helped you on your healing journey?

1. Weir, Kristen. “Music and the Mind.” Monitor on Psychology, vol. 57, no. 2, 1 Mar. 2026, p. 46, [www.apa.org/monitor/2026/03/science-of-music](http://www.apa.org/monitor/2026/03/science-of-music).

2. AMTA. “Guidance for Music Listening Programs | American Music Therapy Association (AMTA).” Musictherapy.org, 2018, [www.musictherapy.org/research/guidance\\_for\\_music\\_listening\\_programs/](http://www.musictherapy.org/research/guidance_for_music_listening_programs/)